DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 199 014 RC 012 578

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TITLE That Little Has Changed: Vocational Education in the Rural South.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 64p.; For related documents, see RC 012 572-577.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Vocational Education; *Blacks; Career Education; Disabilities; *Disadvantaged; Educational Opportunities; Educational Policy; Education Work Relationship; *Employment Opportunities; Equal Education; Females; High School Students; Postsecondary Education; Racial Bias; *Regional Attitudes; *Rural Areas; Rural Education; Secondary Education; Sex Bias; Stereotypes; Test Bias; *Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS *United States (South)

ABSTRACT

The South's rural high schools, particularly their vocational education programs, reflect the history, social relationships, attitudes, and values of the region. Competitive and competency examinations eliminate large numbers of students from advancement to more intensive academic work or vocational skills training. Many students from poor families take vocational education as their sole means for gaining economic security. Vocational education is at the bottom of the educational system in the class origins of its students and in their job prospects; it "has become a means to prepare rural Southern youngsters for entry-level openings in any low-skilled, low-wage industry which happens to need job fodder." The curriculum also perpetuates stereotyped roles for blacks and women, and often fosters emotional and academic dependency and unquestioning acceptance of authority. About half of the currently-offered vocational courses are in home economics or agriculture. Little is done for the emotionally and physically handicapped. Students graduate with little or no training in specific technical skills; the skill training they receive is usually for jobs found only in more metropolitan centers. After graduation, students can: (1) accept a low-paying job in any manufacturing plant that will hire them; (2) attend a technical institute or community college to acquire needed skills, if they can afford it; (3) enlist in the military for its vocational training. (CM)

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Rec. March 24, 1981

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# THAT LITTLE HAS CHANGED: VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE RURAL SOUTH

By Frank Adams and Jennifer Miller

For
The National Institute of Education
1980

RC 012578

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# INTRODUCTION

Vocational education in the rural South's hundreds of high schools legitimates inequality; and, further, high schools, by adopting the prevailing assumptions of those who proclaim social salvation through industrialization and who often heavily influence both local or state educational policy, cause the vocational education curricula to be the means by which differential treatment of blacks, women and the handicapped, in particular, and the poor, in general, are institutionalized. These ills are exacerbated by poverty in the rural South.

Additionally, a review of the Southern states' annual reports, their mandatory five-year plans submitted perfunctorily to secure additional federal funding, coupled with personal visits to over 200 rural high schools in every Southern state during the spring and summer of 1977, plus a careful review of the literature, in education which favors urbanization and industrialization over the preservation or enhancement of rural commercial centers. As Neal Pierce wrote in The Deep South States of America, "Southerners are always talking of 'bringing in' industry, but they rarely talk of 'setting up' industries."[1] Vocational education is being used as one means to attract and accommodate industrial relocation, and in some states is openly exploited as a come-on in the contest between the so-called Sun Belt and Frost Belt.

There is no archetypical vocational education program in the South's rural high schools, although many share descriptive profiles and purposes which on the surface at least appear similar.

Essentially, however, vocational education's content, and the means by which it is delivered, and emphasis given this aspect of secondary education differ greatly from state to state, and, often, by regions within states. The institutional process which has evolved to nominate American presidential candidates is orderly by comparison. A complex mixture of educational philosophy, budget formulae, bureaucratic personality, community values as expressed by tax levies, lingering racial hostilities, sexual sterotyping, even geography, seem responsible for the wide variations. Because of these differences, intrastate comparisons are impossible. Evaluation is equally difficult. Some states collect large quantities of data; others, for apparently good reason, save almost no information. Follow-up data on graduates is scarce, and sometimes contested. As a result, there is hardly an acceptable scientific means available by which the effectiveness or impact of vocational education can be judged. Some data is accumulating as a result of the few, limited but mandatory federal reporting requirements. These, as they relate to Southern rural schools, are examined below. However, it should be noted that the authors found frequent instances of what might be called definitional juggling, a practice sometimes used by local school admininstrators to increase funding allocations, or to satisfy varying federal criteria and stipulations. Arbitrarily defined as different, the same students are counted twice or three times as eligible for or participating in differing programs.

Vocational education enjoys widespread popular support in the rural South. The belief is widely held that the skills

schools teach have a critical, direct relationship to adult success, especially with regard to jobs. Vocational education, particularly for those parents whose children do not intend to go to college, is seen as an equalizer for employment success. The popular theory can be summarized as this: Given equal access to a vocational skill, a child can match his or her inherent talent free of the social restraints imposed in the past by race, sex, class, or additonal schooling, and can "make it." The idea has been reinforced by political rhetoric, some federal court decisions and legislation, and by vocational education's advocates. The facts don't support the theory. A comprehensive review of the nation's literature on the correlation between educational accomplishment and employment shows that those who "have it made," or are advantaged either financially or socially at the outset of schooling gain more advantage in status, incomes, and security through education than their less advantaged peers. Further, the popular theory ignores the near universal fact that vocational education at the high school level has been relegated to a secondary role. Two-year post secondary institutes have virtually consumed the field of advanced cognitive skill development once the vital bedrock of high school vocational education. Today, as often as not, in the South's under-financed rural high schools, students learn what a welder's arc is. They learn how to use one at the technical institute <u>after</u> graduation from high school. Popular support for vocational education also ignores the role of the school as a credentialing institution, a means of rationing opportunity. In this respect, perhaps more than any other factor regarding the rural South where jobs are scarce

and sometimes gotten only through kinship or communal ties, vocational education plays a vitally important screening function for the economy.

Lastly, the South's rural high schools as a whole, and the vocational classes which are part of their daily routines, mirror the social relationships, attitudes and values of the communities in which they were built to serve. Inequalities remain deeply embedded in the rural South, both defining and delimiting the high schools and any programs in them. Overwhelmingly, children of the poor take vocational education as their sole means for gaining economic security later in adult life. Children of the affluent take vocational education for avocational reasons. Vocational education's fundamental flaw in the rural South is the mistaken notion that the interests of each student are the same. The idea that equality derives only from individual initiative and unfettered economic growth is a fundemental part of the Southern ethos, and, as well, the American liberal tradition. One Southern state requires by law that premises of free enterprise be taught in the classroom. Vocational education is not included in the curriculum in order to more equitably redistribute wealth, but as a means to keep privilege and power intact. Vocational education is effective strategy for appeasement.

I. Low-Skill Programs + Attitude Training = Job Fodder.

The South has remained a rural region longer than other portions of the United States. Of late, though, the South has been urbanizing at a faster rate. Between 1960 and 1970, as the national proportion of people living in rural areas dropped from about 30 percent to 25 percent, Southerners were moving out of the country and into the cities at a rapid clip, so that over 64 percent were called urbanites.[2] Still, however, well over one third of the South's people live in "the rurals."

Commercial expositions, tax lures, subsidies of many sorts, including new industrial buildings rent free, and the promise of cheap anti-union labor have secured new industry throughout the South, spuring urbanization and dramatic changes in who works at what to earn a living in the South. In 1910, 54.8 percent of the workforce labored on farms or in agriculture's related commerce. By 1970, 23.1 percent of the workforce was employed in agriculture, but that figure rapidly declined during the decade of the Seventies, a period when agriculture swiftly mechanized and industries moved out of the industrialized North.[3] Time and time again since Reconstruction, the South's political and commercial leadership have proclaimed a new age of prosperity, heralded usually as "the New South." The Seventies was another such period. Industrialization, however, has not been without social or environmental pain. Laws to inhibit unions run counter to national norms, as do patterns of racial discrimination which conflict with federal equal opportunity statutes. But despite those and similar problems, the region's political figures continue to court industry at home and abroad to relocate in the so-called Sun Belt.

It is on those places which by U.S. Census definition remain rural in the South that this study focused. When vocational education was introduced into the rural Southern schools shortly after World War I, and particularly during the 1920's, the courses were symbiotically a part of community life. The South, as we have seen, was an agrarian society in which to a large extent, people had to be self-sufficient if they were to survive. Most rural youngsters, if they went to school at all, worked on the family's farm each day before and after school. Courses in agriculture and home economics directly related education to their lives. What was taught in class could be put to use immediately in the course of life.

But even these places have changed in the South. Few communities any longer depend entirely upon agriculture as the wellspring of their economy. Isolation has been broken down by a network of roads which connect virtually every rural community with some nearby urban commercial shopping center's well-stocked counters. The rapidity of change can be seen in the fact that between 1966 and 1970, according to the Emergency Land Fund, an Atlanta, Georgia, based organization founded to keep up with such matters, nearly a quarter of a million small family farms went out of existence.[4] They were swallowed up by larger farming operations, agribusinesses, or surburban sprawl. Isolated rural communities still exist in the South, but they are not the commonplace of yesteryear. Living self-sufficiently on a farm is passe for many reasons, including the increased value of prime agriculture land for nonframing purposed, the advent of agribusiness founded the technology and economies of scale, tax policies, and

urbanization. Yet, despite these substantial changes in the rural South's way of making a living, its social fabric and its very landscape, similar alterations in vocational education programs seem minisule. Sixty years ago, half of the vocational classes rural schools focused on agriculture, a fourth on home-making skills, and the rest dealt with basic home repair and industrial service trades.[6] Today, while less than a fourth of the class offerings in the South's rural high schools center on agriculture, the numbers of students in home economics have swelled. All told, based on enrollments in Southern states reports, about half of the vocational courses offered today continue to be either home economics or agriculture.

But more to the point is the fact that the content of these courses themselves have failed to keep abreast of rapidly changing characteristics in the South's workforce. Boys study agriculture methods related to the family farm. Agribusiness, its methods, organization, and demands, are only beginning to be acknowledged. Girls continue to be taught how to cook, sew, or fix hair. The fact that many, if not most, women work outside the home in today's South is recognized the growing numbers of bookkeeping, typing and secretarial courses. "We haven't changed much in the years I've been here," one veteran Mississippi teacher said.

Indeed, one of this report's authors graduated from a rural North Carolina high school in 1959. The vocational education program offered by that school consisted of home economics, agriculture, woodworking, typing and mechanical drawing. Today, over two decades later, the offspring of that author attends a rural North Carolina rural high school only 30 miles away. The

vocational education program offered at that school consists of home economics, agriculture, typing, bookkeeping, masonry, and carpentry. The expansion, which typifies much of vocational education's alteration in the past 30 years, has been primarily in office skills.

No longer isolated from the rest of the nation, people in the South's rural communities now must compete for their livelihoods within a larger and rapidly changing economic order. Their relative lack of local occupational opportunities is not aided by outmoded high school vocational programs. One leading official in vocational education policymaking admitted recently that "links between rural vocational education and economic development are almost nonexistent." Historically, proponents of vocational education have contended that, at the very least, occupational training makes schools relevant to students who otherwise might drop out before graduation, and in the South, advocates of vocational education still expound that argument. Yet the average drop-out rate in the Southern states in 1970 was 16.1 percent, compared to 10.3 percent among the rest of the nation's 16 and 17 year olds.[7] These factors become even more significant when they are placed in the context of the South's economic decision makers have an overarching bias toward urbanization and insustrialization, even in states where over half of the citizens continue to live in rural areas. Where welding, office skills, machine shop techniques and other similar courses have replaced the older agriculture education programs, such courses have infrequent economic value in small towns. How many bookkeepers or welders can a community of 2,000 absorb

annually? Nowhere is training going on in high schools to aid graduates in setting up small businesses, or worker-owned and managed light industry, or small-scale farming or fishing or timbering through equipment sharing, processing, distribution and marketing cooperatives. Instead, youngsters graduate from rural high schools with little or no skill training, and the skill training they have received is most likely for jobs which exist only in more metropolitan centers. Generally, three options confront thousands of graduates each spring: they can take the lowest paying job in the first manufacturing operation which will hire them; they can find the means to buy one or two years of schooling at a technical institute or community college in order to learn what they could have learned in high school (and, some argue, would have learned 30 years ago when vocational education classes were first implemented); or they can enlist in one branch or another of the military, which operates the world's largest vocational education program.

Educational policymakers argue that this tilt toward jobs which are only found away from home in the urbanized and urbanizing areas is good and necessary. The strategy, some administrators say, is to train youngsters for jobs "no matter where they might find them." By developing "a pool of human resources and skills in every corner of the state," one vocational educator said, "we help industry hunters lure new firms to our state." Like many of his counterparts interviewed during this study, although not all, this administrator demanded anonymity before frank discussion ensued. Locally, in shabby high schools, and in the maze of offices which usually characterize state-level vocational bureau-

cracies, administrators stressed students were being oriented to "the world of work," a phrase repeated in as many dialects as there are rural Souths - from the haughty Tidewater of Virginia, to the Gullah of the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia, to the Cajun in Louisiana. When pressed for an explanation of the phrase's meaning, administrators and teachers alike responded, in sum, by saying, "Our kids will have to travel fifty or sixty miles to find jobs if they want to continue living here when they finish high school. Most of them will have to move away. Most employers today don't care if a kid can do a job. They will teach him the work. They want to be certain the kid will get to work regularly, be on time, and will do what he's told without questions."

In other words, given this prevailing philosophy, plus the evident policy of relegating intensive skill training in most employment areas to the burgeoning number of community colleges and technical institutes and out of the high school level, vocational education in the South's rural secondary schools has become a means to prepare rural Southern youngsters for entry-level openings in any low-skilled, low-wage industry which happens to need job fodder. As Jonathan P. Sher has noted, students finishing a vocational education program in a rural high shcool tend to migrate to the cities where they become "little more than a pool of surplus labor." Exactly how great that surplus has become is evident in the statistics of unemployment among American youth which run four and five times greater than among adults.[8]

Perhaps as discouraging is the suspicion uncovered during countless interviews across the South that no administrator,

teacher or policymaker really wants to know what happens to vocational students once they graduate. Virtually every school system in the South points with pride to the number to the number of graduates who attend their state's flagship universities, or leave the state for higher education. However, state-level follow-up reports on graduates of vocational education high school programs are rare, and imprecise, particularly in comparison to the lengthy, detailed five-year projection reports which are necessary for continued federal funding. And administrator commented that it is difficult to prove vocational education's impact on students, but said, "The children are being emotionally prepared for the world of work." He was referring to one goal of vocational training which he and other state administrators, in person and in state reports, claim to be accomplishing; that is, students are being counseled and trained to participate in the new industrial economy with the proper work habits and attitudes. The administrator could make no such claim of success about preparation for particular skills.

Ideally, an educational process should encourage students to ask questions, explore, discover the world of knowledge, and develop their own best talents in relation to future learning or occupational pursuits. The policies guiding vocational education is the rural South, coupled with declining job opportunities in those areas and underfunded, outmoded occupational programs, appears aimed instead at developing a docile workforce for an increasingly industrialized region in which individuals do not question, change their attitudes, or explore new value systems. These policies are epitomized by a placard in one state admini-

strator's office which read:

"Rules for Vocational Instruction:

1. The Director is always right.
2. If the Director is wrong, see Rule 1."

The sign was obviously a joke, certainly only one state director poking fun at himself and his own system. But a highly regarded official with the American Vocational Education Association wasn't joking when he pridefully told how high school programs instill positive work attitudes: "Sears in Atlanta," he recounted, "used to hire every lad who walked in with an FFA (Future Farmers of America) jacket on. They knew he'd take orders, work hard, and get along."

II. Staying the same in a Changing Region.

Was the administrator correct? Are there no firm links between the outcomes of vocational education and the economic development, or the lack of it, in the communities surrounding the South's rural high schools? Since the days of Henry W. Grady the term New South has been a label for Southern regeneration, a credo for businessmen, bankers, journalists and others who envisioned the South's economic flowering. Periodically in 1865, 1877, 1900, and 1913, and most lately in the 1970's, the era of a New South has been proclaimed by the region's boosters.

Significantly, perhaps, the authors of federal legislation which allocated the first United States tax dollars for vocational education were Georgians, Hoke Smith and Dudley Hughes, who sincerely proclaimed skills training in high schools would foster industrial and commercial development, particularly in their native

South, and, they prophesied in congressional speeches, democracy would be strengthened.

But not all bankers and businessmen in the South have been New South boosters backing vocational education, in particular, or education, in general. In Alabama, for example, Irving Gershenberg after studying school attendance patterns concluded that poor whites who wanted to got to school were kept from being educated, like blacks, by white ruling groups, the planters, industrialists, merchants, and bankers.[9] Nor were these Alabamians without intellectual allies. In 1930, a group of the South's most noted writers issued a manifesto called, I'll Take My Stand, an attack on the New South philosophy as a debasement of the authentic Southern agrarian lifestyle. These writers, many of whom continue to influence the region's letters as honored men genuinely sought to return to antebellum ways. Economic or racial justice, they feared, already had been accomplished; democracy had somehow gained a foothold in the South.

Little wonder then in the face of these and similar attacks, vocational education is seen as having but tenuous links, if any which are acknowledged publically, to community economic development. "The failures of this legislation (Smith-Hughes)," wrote scholar Wayne J. Urban of Georgia State University, "and other public school programs in the South... to provide the democratization and social mobility they promised are typical of the failures of the New South philosophy in its own region."[10]

The promises of New South boosters appear empty statiscally. Nearly 40 percent of all the nation's poor families live in the 11 Southern states. Fifty percent of the nation's blacks live in

the South, and the average black family's income is $5,226 a year compared to $9,240 for the average white family.[11] The South's people complete the fewest number of years of formal schooling, lead the nation in infant mortality rates and communicable diseases associated with poverty. They work in the highest number of manufacturing jobs which net them the lowest wages in the nation.

Problems facing minorities and women in the national workplace are sharply apparent in the South because of the region's low income and education levels. The hallowed Southern woman, a figure of near mythic proportions, actually earns only 59 cents for every dollar a man earns in the same 40-hour week.[12] Black women, who are most likely to carry the weighty responsibility of heading a family alone, also are most likely to face unemployment or the lowest wages, as has been documented repeatedly in Southern states' unemployment statistics, and in public employment figures.[13]

And particularly for women and blacks, it appears, vocational educational plays an important channeling role which perpetuates jobs in low-paying categories. In Florida, for example, where vocational education is delivered through a combination of secondary and post-secondary institutions operated by both the state and localities, females constituted 90 percent of the total enrollment in health and office occupations, and home economics, according to Office of Civil Rights figures for the year 1973-74. And while the state's black population was reportedly 12.2 percent, a total of 21 percent of the total enrollment in home economics was black. In office occupations the figure was 29 percent.[14]

Young Southerners are funneled into these bottom rung careers through a variety of devices-- by high school counselors, peer pressures, subtle ways teachers have to discourage learning, and, probably most visibly, the battery of tests administered annually to each child, placing them in some educational scheme of things. The latest of these ego-defeating devices are the competency tests. While not born in the South, these tests have gained wide currancy among Southern political leaders and educators. As the initial results have been analyzed, they reveal a bias in their composition which favors upper-class, urban white students, and, predictably, they perpetuate the idea that country folk are bumpkins. In North Carolina, for instance, only 7 percent of urban Wake County's eleventh grade students failed the most recent reading test, and 10 percent failed the math component. But in rural Gates County, where nearly 53 percent of the student body is black and nearly 63 percent of the county's entire population have incomes below the poverty level, the competency tests resulted in 16 percent of the eleventh grade students failing the reading test and 20 percent the math.[15] The result of these and similar testing devices, which are easily available to most students and known frequently by their peers, only perpetuate and institutionalize the inequalities to be found in vocational education.

Civic boosters and governmental leaders often use such statistics, or similar ones related to the South's poverty, illiteracy and poor health to support their schemes for uplifting the region. But other aspects of recent economic development history are equally important to note before concluding, as the boosters do,

that industrialization is the panacea for the South's seemingly perpetual economic distress. For instance, neither income nor education levels for the lowest strata of the South's people have risen in unison with the increased profits derived from the region's expanding manufacturing and service industries. The so-called "filter down" theory of economic development has been challenged most recently by the Institute for Southern Studies, a Durham, North Carolina, organization which publishes a quarterly journal, Southern Exposure. According to the Institute's 1978 study, while the average Southerner's income rose from 84 percent of his or her national counterpart in 1970 to 88 percent in 1975, still the number of Southerners living below the poverty level barely declined during that period.[16] North Carolina's economic history explains why: the Tar Heel state ranks eighth in the nation in the number of persons employed in manufacturing, and first in the number of persons of its total workforce in industrial jobs - a fact which startles most North Carolinians, who continue to consider their state and themselves as rural. In terms of value added to the goods produced by North Carolina's workers, the state ranks seventh in the total value of goods shipped to other states or nations. However, and here's the rub, the overall wages for the state's workers average $4.47 per hour, the lowest industrial wage in the nation. In terms of median capita income is $4,922. One out of five North Carolinian's are poor by any accepted definition.[17]

There is yet another way to look behind the argument for increased industrialization - and hence a greater demand for

vocational education - and that is to examine unemployment rate for blacks is twice as high as for whites in the region. Income gaps remain unchanged between the region's richest five percent of the population, and the rest of the citizens. In 1953, the bottom fifth of the population received 3.5 percent of the total personal income. The top fifth shared 43.5 percent. In 1976, the bottom fifth received 5 percent, while the top fifth divided 42.3 percent.[18]

A recent study prepared for the Conference of State Manufacturers' Associations ranked the South highest in the business world's view of places with the most desirable climate for new industry; that is, those states with the cheapest labor, fewest unions, and the best tax incentives. Significantly, Southern states also increasingly offer pliant post-secondary programs to train workers for new companies. Little wonder that industry has been moving South at such a clip since 1968 that one million new manufacturing jobs have been created in 11 Southern states.[19]

This surge of industrial development has come to a region where only 40 years ago nearly half of the workers were employed in agriculture work of some kind. Today, farms employ only 5 percent of the South's labor force. The work which has absorbed displaced farmers and farm workers over the recent decades has been neither lucrative nor proud. Despite recent economic diversification, the South is dominated by low-wage manufacturing, chiefly textiles, apparel, tobacco and furniture or pulpwood cutting.

Vocational education's efforts to accommodate alterations in the labor market in the past two decades have focused mainly on the

advanced skill training programs of the post-secondary institutions, not in high school programs, urban or rural. In South Carolina, for example, the post secondary system is a key partner in the state's economic development program, which has attracted over $10 billion in new capital investment in the past six years.[20] One out of six South Carolinians between the ages of 16 and 64 is enrolled in one of the state's 16 technical colleges and centers.[21] In promotional material published by the State Development Board, such as a magazine advertisement headlined-- "Helping the Goose Produce," the state claims to have the most advanced employed training program in America. The goose, by the way, is big business and industry in a state which is still almost half rural.

Likewise, North Carolina's community college/technical institute system has been touted "a model for industrial training." This year (1979-80), 100,000 North Carolinians will be trained in one or two-year programs in 230 occupations, ranging from auto mechanics, accounting, X-ray technicians, to digital electronic technicians. The state allocated $1,200 per student regardless of each program's cost, but in some of the newer technology courses puts out $2,500 in tax dollars to train the future worker.[22] Yet, in early 1980, one technical institute president in the state declared the depth of training "shallow," and the state's commissioner of labor charged that the system was geared toward producing only semi-skilled workers. One industrialist agreed, telling a legislative panel studying the vocational education system that tool and die makers graduated from the community college system were not skilled craftsmen. "Obviously, when he comes in, he has a little advantage over the guy that was right out of

high school. He's got two years of familiarity and he knows how to walk around the shop without stubbing his toe, or cutting his finger off. But he's not a tool maker.[23]

At the same hearing, state vocational education officials admitted that North Carolina was spending a yearly average of only $187 per high school student, while the national average in 1976 was $320.12.[24]

III. Still Separate and Unequal

Although vocational education in rural schools rarely succeeds in training students for skilled jobs, and administrators do not make claims of being able to do so with their limited high school programs, the programs do successfully separate children into unequal levels of future opportunities. One Southern state administrator recounted a conversation he had with a black youth who complained, "You took us out of inferior schools and put us into inferior programs." Or more grandly, W. Norton Grubb wrote that historically vocational education has been used "to integrate various groups into the schools and then into the economy- immigrants and migrant blacks in the Progressive Era, minorities in the 1960's, minorities, women and bilingual groups in the 1970's... Vocational courses provided a way of including these 'different' children within the public schools while maintaining a distinction between the 'masses' and the 'classes'."[25]

As is true nationally, students who take the vocational education track in rural Southern high schools are primarily from low-income backgrounds. Although minorities make up only 14 percent of the total high school enrollments in the country, they comprise 23 percent of those in secondary vocational programs. As already mentioned with statistics from Florida, women are also enrolled in vocational classes in proportions higher than their overall numbers compared to men: 49.5 pervent of all high school students and 57 percent of the secondary vocational students are women.[26] In rural Southern schools where vocational course offerings are usually limited to agriculture, home economics,

business and office skills, and a few trades, diminished opportunities due to traditional biases are particularly hurtful. That little has changed to date is apparent from statistics available on male/female enrollments in different course areas, dividing along near obsolete career lines: low-income and minority race girls study to be homemakers and secretaries, boys study low-level trade skills or agriculture. Current labor marker statistics sharply point to the legacy of inferior education: women and minorities have the lowest paying, least skilled jobs in the South where the majority of jobs are already low-skilled and low-wage.

Gerogia, for example, is a state dominated in Atlanta. About 35 percent of the state's workers hold service jobs, a sector which accompanies urban growth, and yet this is a state which has remained agricultural longer than most of its neighbors. The urban draw is at work in Georgia, and its results thus far have been less than bright for women and minorities. In 1970, 40 percent of those employed in service work were black; 57.2 percent were women. In 1973, only 8 percent of the minority work force held professional jobs in the state.[27] Yet the female labor force is approaching 50 percent and growing.[28]

Louisiana is also a state of high contrasts. The massing of lucrative oil and petrochemical jobs along the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico contrasts starkly beside the quarter of the state's population which lives below the poverty level, and who strive to earn livings in the tourist industry as in agriculture. The high-wage multinational energy and chemical corporations

employ less than 10 percent of Louisiana's work force; the fastest growing area of employment is the service sector, in a state where half of the population is still rural and almost a third of the people are black.[29]

According to 1979 statistics, Louisiana, like most Southern states, ranks low in incorporation female students into traditionally male vocational courses: Only 6.35 percent of the students in these courses were female. Only 14.13 percent of the state's superintendents, assistant superintendents, principals and assistant principals were women.[30] And the secondary-level course offerings hold little promise of change from the state's economic and educational status quo. In Louisiana's Five-Year State Plan '78-82 for vocational education, projected enrollments revealed that, as in other Southern states surveyed, home economics courses continue to divert a larger number of female students than other vocational categories, with office skills class enrollments closely following.

Several metropolitan areas, notably Washington, D.C., dominate economic growth in Virginia, and service work, much of it clerical, accounts for over 40 percent of the total employment; 53.4 percent of the state's service workers in 1970 were women.[31] Low-wage manufacturing jobs employ about 20 percent of the state's workers. Statistics on women and blacks in textiles, apparel and chemicals, where wages are higher than in textiles or apparel, are Virginia's women not a majority of the workforce, and this pattern holds true for these and other industries in the rest of the Southern states.

| 1974 | Number Employed | Female Workers | Black Workers | Average Hourly Wage for Production Workers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Textiles | 45,000 | 53% | 21% | $3.08 |
| Apparel | 39,000 | 85% | 15% | 2.68 |
| Chemicals | 38,000 | 19% | 15% | 4.56[32] |

In the "Annual Long-Range Planning and Budgeting" section of the Virginia State Plan for Vocational Education, 1978-82, the authors report that the Virginia Employment Commission cites labor needs in excess of supply from all occupational training programs, adding, "A high percentage of these jobs can be filled with trained persons with a secondary school education or less." Yet the state superintendent of Virginia schools told the press in January, 1980, vocational education programs "may be training youngsters for obsolescence." Schools are not training students for careers that will be open toward the end of the century, he said, and cited the need for more skill-training in energy and health fields, for example.[33]

Within the state's five-year plan are projected enrollments in secondary programs which include a breakdown of estimated numbers of male and female students. The data clearly reveals ongoing stratification, closely resembling that found in other states. For instance, 24,927 male students and only 2,783 females were estimated to enroll in agriculture courses in 1978. "Consumer and Homemaking" listed 68,181 females and only 7,462 males. Office courses were projected to enroll 50,006 females and 12,494 males. And trade and industrial courses were expected to draw 32,203 boys and 13,134 girls.[34]

Although figures are not given for minority representation in the states' reports, it is interesting to note that, in Virginia,

24 percent of total secondary school enrollment is black in a state where blacks make up only 19 percent of the total population.[35] In the fall of 1976, total enrollment in private secondary schools in Virginia was 23,735.[36] Of course, private schools are not unique to Virginia, nor are they unique to the South. But, focusing on the larger South in this regard, it is worth mentioning that in the 1970-71 school year, approximately 450,000 to 500,000 students attended private segregationist schools in the 11-state South. And figures from the National Education Association show significant drops in the public schools, Louisiana lost 11,401, and Mississippi lost 40,889.[37] As stated in a Southern Regional Council report, public school systems became all-black in some areas, and in many instances, the school boards remained under the control of whites who were sending their children to private schools.[38]

An interesting side note to this is a comment from a leading official in the American Vocational Education Association: "You don't find many school bond issues (in the South) defeated for construction of vocational education facilities," he said about the South's enthusiasm for such programs. "And where you do, these are mostly in black-belt counties where 20 percent of the population is white and owns 80 percent of the wealth."

Segregation of the races within integrated high schools' vocational education programs was recently documented in North Carolina by a coalition of concerned citizens and lawyers. According to statistics from the Legal Defense Fund and Citizens Committee complaint to the state and subsequently to HEW in 1978, racial separation, as well as sexual stratification, is ingrained in the state's

high schools. For example, of 69 local education agencies studied by the Committee, 10 percent of all vocational classes were either 100 percent white or 100 percent black, and 65 percent of the 3,155 vocational classes in 69 LEAs were "racially imbalanced." That same study found that 29 percent of the vocational classes were 100 percent male and 28 percent female; 60 of 65 LEAs had 75 percent or more of their classes "sex imbalanced."[39] Similar complaints, although not as carefully documented, have been voiced in other Southern states.

Following up on the LDF-Citizens Committee complaint, the Atlanta Office of Civil Rights investigated 10 eastern North Carolina high schools and issued findings at the end of 1979, confirming non-compliance with Title VI and Title IX regulations of the Vocational Education Programs Grudelines for Eliminating Discrimination and Denial of Services on the Basis or Race, Color, National Origin, Sex and Handicap in eight of the schools. Generally, the OCR investigation revealed that few or no black or female students were in the high-skill programs. For example, in one high school, clothing services were predominately black and female, and masonry enrolled mostly black males, while technical drafting and electricity classes were predominately white males. In cooperative education programs, participation by blacks and females was limited. One school official blamed local attitudes, the students themselves, and local employers who asked for white boys to work part-time with them. But the OCR also pointed to insufficient counseling activities to guide minorities and female students into nontraditional course areas. Although no student is denied admission to particular courses,

they may be advised against taking a certain course if it is not one in which other women or blacks in the area hold jobs. The advanced skills courses and cooperative education or work/study programs often require prerequisite courses that a student may not have taken earlier for the school-coordinated job programs; thus, those who could most use the money and training are not eligible. Other barriers are curricular materials and counseling literature that so not show women and blacks in nontraditional roles, and in the case of cooperative education, there are fees to pay, tests to pass, and references to be obtained from instructors and counselors.[40]

Obviously, in the poorer rural schools where course offerings are most limited and cooperative education programs are few or non-existing, the problems for minorities and females are both heightened and more difficult to overcome.

One black woman from eastern North Carolina complained about vocational education, "I knew a black boy who took three years of masonry in high school, and when he graduated and went to work as a bricklayer, expecting to use what he had learned, he went on the job as a laborer, carrying bricks! He wasted three years of high school."

Even those students who go on to further skill training education may have wasted high school years in vocational courses, according to no less an authority than North Carolina's chairman of the Trades and Industrial Education Advisory Committee, "We take a kid and give him two years in high school, and many times, when he goes to a technical institute, he has to start from scratch. He wastes two years of taxpayers' money and two years of his own money."[41]

Another official in North Carolina's state vocational education office remarked recently that the federal government, through strings attached to funds, plays an important role in assuring some special consideration for women, minorities and for the handicapped (although, he said, in the case of handicapped children, problems seem virtually insurmountable because of lack of funds.[42] Without federally mandated reminders, the official condidly admitted, state and local leaders "in their zeal to serve the total population, tend to overlook those special needs." In most cases, it is federal funding, not state or local monies, which supports programs to ease sexual and racial stratification.

Top state officials are, by and large, white males. Trades and industry teachers usually are men; home economics, office skills and health occupations teachers usually are women. Altogether, models for change are not visible. North Carolina set up a Sex Equity office for secondary vocational education, funded by federal money, and staffed by a man and a woman. Hopes for reform from the state level rest on the efforts of these two people. They face an enormous task.

Of the Southern states which report efforts toward eliminating sex bias in vocational training, South Carolina has been the most active. State administrators, in their most recent report, document the results of their efforts thus far: The largest change from 1975-76 vocational education enrollment to 1977-78 was in agriculture courses, with a 6 percent increase of female students. There were about 2 percent more female enrollees in distributive education and trades and industry courses after that two-year period. The total percentage of female students in all vocational

courses during that time did not change; those who enrolled in agriculture or trades simply did not enroll in or continue their previous health occupations or consumer and homemaking courses. Office occupations enrollments held steady throughout. And, overall, male students did not partake of traditionally female vocational programs during this switchover.[43]

Similarly, when North Carolina hired a woman to direct the "New Pioneers Project" to "eliminate" sex bias in the state, she also encountered male students' reluctance to try occupational training courses with majority female students. She commented in her report, "...it is harder to teach a boy shorthand than to teach a girl to lay block. Except for personal typing and accounting, the rigidities of the secretarial position make it continue to be undesirable to boys."[44]

Male students may be hanging back for another reason, too, as suggested in the South Carolina state report. Referring to training men for public service jobs such as child care workers, the authors wrote, "Since salaries are low and since the principal bread winner in most families is male, attracting men to enroll in them will be difficult."[45]

Yet, in the heavily industrialized and low-wage sections of North and South Carolina, at least half of the female population works. And a sizable number of them are the "principal bread winners" in their families. In the South overall, women are heads of household for over one-third of black families, and one-fifth of white families, and these families comprise 60 percent of those living in federally recognized poverty.[46]

Unemployment statistics from 1976 in South Carolina strongly indicate the need in that state, as well as others, to improve education and training for women and minorities. Unemployed white men averaged only 3.7 percent unemployment, but white women were 7.7 percent unemployed. For "non-whites," which in South Carolina refers mainly to balcks, unemployment levels were 8.1 percent for men and 15.1 percent for women.[47]

In the following examination of economic and vocational education status in North Carolina and, particularly, in rural Gates County, it becomes increasingly apparent that aid for women, minorities and the handicapped is not forthcoming. The combination of outdated rural high school programs, stratification within those programs, and state-mandated direction toward either further specific skill training or low-skill employment within new industry--which is invited in from other states rather than developed by rural people themselves-- bodes little that is good for those at the bottom of the educational and occupational ladder.

IV. Good Jobs, Bad Jobs, or No Jobs at All: The Urban Bias

In most rural communities in the South, a good job pays the minimum wage, offers no job security, and only those benefits which result from nationally mandated legislation or national and religious holidays. A bad job pays less for longer hours, less security, and the most dreary work. For many, there are no jobs at all. The best jobs in the South always seem to away in the cities.

To reach these best jobs, rural Southerners climb out of bed long before dawn. The headlights on their cars and pickups streak into Knoxville from the hollows outside, or Birmingham, or Baton Rouge, or Norfolk and Hampton in long, endless lines each morning Monday through Friday. More often than not, they have punched in are on the line by 7 a.m. Usually, these better jobs are in plants where unions have gained a precarious toehold, or which have federal contracts. But most of these jobs are of dubious quality. As we have seen, while North Carolina ranks first the number of textile, furniture, tobacco manufacturing plants and jobs, and produces more industrial goods than 42 other states, the average industrial wage is the lowest in the nation. And for those workers in the rapidly growing chicken processing plants, and the cut and sew apparel manufacturing plants which dot the South's landscape, even that low North Carolina wage of $4.87 an hour looks golden. They, too, start work at daybreak, but there are countless means used by the plant managers to curb a day's pay: in one chicken processing plant, for instance, the assembly line starts cutting up fryers exactly at 5:50 a.m. Everyone on the line starts being paid at 6 a.m.

"Cheap" labor, one of the South's most widely advertised commodities, plus costly financial and regulatory inducements have successfully attracted new industry to the South, and particularly to North Carolina. North Carolina's present governor, James Hunt, has repeatedly assured citizens that his economic development policy is an even-handed one which will accomplish balanced growth. High-wage, high status industrial jobs will be located in both urban and rural parts of North Carolina, he has declared. So will low-wage, low status jobs.

Skeptics in North Carolina argue industry will and does locate where it pleases, and seldom, if ever, heeds the whim of the governor's so-called balanced growth policy. Others, more friendly to the governor's interests, say privately his administration has been forced to adopt the rhetoric of balanced growth as a means of soothing growing voter irritability over the recognition of what it means to be a worker in a state with high levels of industrialization and the lowest wages and benefits. Yet, in the most rural sections of North Carolina (and other states), where minority populations are usually the highest, and where the demise of the family farm continues unabated displacing larger numbers of persons, the question of any job or not remains the prime consideration.

Critics of the state government's broad invitation to the business world argue that Governor Hunt connot achieve "balanced growth." The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research has charged, "In the metropolitan areas, nearly one-half of all new manufacturing jobs created between 1962 and 1976 were high wage...

In non-metropolitan areas, on the other hand, only one-eighth of the new manufacturing jobs were high wage.[48]

Governor Hunt stands by his promise of even dispersal of high-wage industry, even though it is increasingly apparent that national and foreign industries have "balancing" policies of their own-- that is, balancing various states' incentives one against the other, as well as weighing the advantages of locations where low-wage companies are already entrenched. As Edwin M. Bergman of UNC Chapel Hill's Department of City and Regional Planning writes, "Just as firms and industries seek low-wage areas among the states, areas of low-wage workers are aslo sought within the state." Bergman says North Carolina's "Balanced Growth Policy" channels low-wage labor intensive industries to metropolitan centers. And he foresees an increasingly dual labor market in rural and urban areas of North Carolina. Thus, "If the dual economy provides jobs which are increasingly divided into good and bad opportunities (judged by pay, stability, upward mobility, work conditions, etc.), then based on repeated observations in other local economies, we will expect, whites and 30-45 year old workers to hold most of the good jobs and women, blacks and youth... to hold bad jobs."[49]

Dr. Bergman also cites the work of another researcher who found that foreign multinational corporations which have located in North Carolina have come to the counties with lower than average wage rates and higher than average percentages of blacks and females in the workforce. These corporations are less than responsive to local economic development needs, he states, and they have the economic freedom to migrate should conditions prove

unfavorable. "This becomes all the more important when one recognizes that a policy preoccupation with large-scale corporate recruitment tends to displace efforts to intitate or retain small to medium size firms which are entrepreneurially linked to local economies and within which most of the future U.S. job growth is expected by the year 2000."[50]

Also, the National Manpower Institute reported in 1978 that, "Although the location of more manufacturing plants in rural areas, especially in the Southeast, has resulted in somewhat more diversified employment opportunity, a large proportion of these jobs are going to workers imported from urban areas. The problem is compounded by inferior labor market information systems and inadequate educational and vocational preparation."[51]

In the spring of 1979, a prominent newspaper editor in North Carolina, Claude Sitton of the Raleigh News & Observer, aptly observed that in the last decade North Carolina has ranked seventh, eighth or ninth from the bottom in educational spending beyond high school, and seventh, eighth or ninth from the bottom in expenditures on the public schools. Sitton remarked, "When it comes to education, ours is a state of limited resources, poorly distributed."[52]

North Carolina's 58 community colleges and technical institutes have been constructed in the past two decades, and now the state spends more tax dollars on post-secondary education than on secondary-level training. Yet, fifty-four percent of the state's high school students in 1979 graduated from a vocational education program; as one industry spokesman said, the programs are "turning out secretaries, people in the construction trades or auto mechanics." And, in rural eastern North Carolina, students may not

have opportunities to learn even those limited skills. At a recent hearing, state officials admitted that in eastern North Carolina, which is becoming more industrialized, not one high school has a machine shop.[53]

"We don't give any special attention to rural education," a top administrative official in North Carolina' state vocational education office explained. "We provide vocational education uniformly across the state." A uniform fund distribution formula, though, hurts rural schools more than urban ones, as was charged in the Legal Defense Fund and Citizens Committee complaint of 1978. In the aftermath of that complaint and an HEW investigation, the administrator said, North Carolina has decided to change its distribution formula. Beginning in the 1980-'81 school year, the state will give rural schools with "less ability to pay" more federal dollars than that received by wealthier urban districts; but state money will be divided in the same uniform manner. The official added, "Next year we're going to give them more federal dollars, but still, in order for them to get that, they are going to have to come up with that approximate 30 percent to match it, or else they'll have to return those federal dollars. More and more, small local units are having that problem." It is also generally true, he acknowledged, that schools which have in the past returned federal funds because they lack local money are in areas of high black population, in North Carolina and across the South.

Still another major drawback to effective vocational education in rural areas became apparent when this administrator spoke of the high school training system's pride and joy: the actual work-exper-

ience programs. Work-study programs involve students in public sector employment; cooperative education relies on the private business sector for jobs. In North Carolina, as is true throughout the South, these on-the-job training opportunities are most numerous and available for students in urban areas: nine urban to one rural work-study program in North Carolina, and 38 to 13 in the South overall.[54] And, of course, cooperative education succeeds only where there are businesses cooperative with. Rural students may miss the dubious experience of spending part of their school day in factories, stores or fast food restaurants, for there are so few such work places even for adults.

In low-income areas throughout the South, rural high schools haven't the funds, facilities or teachers to break from traditional and often irrelevant vocational programs. A top official in North Carolina's system acknowledged recently, "The vocational training system in rural high schools has the vestiges of one serving an agrarian society." The process of eliminating outdated programs is slow, he said, achieved over time in North Carolina by projecting smaller enrollments in that occupational category in the state's five-year plan. Since 1963, for example, the number of high school agriculture teachers in the state decreased from about 700 to 400, a sizable difference, he said. Yet 400 agriculture teachers still averages four per county in a state where less than five percent of the labor force farms or works on farms.

This North Carolina administrator went on to explain, "The teacher is the bottom-line in any education system." Although the state pays the full salary for other public school teachers, 30 percent of a vocational education teacher's salary is financed by the

local school district. In this aspect, too, rural areas are disadvantaged, the official said. "Without sufficient funds, you can't attract quality and character. So, it comes down to providing nothing, or something." He added about rural high schools, "If a student comes into a vocational program with a poor academic background, he can't make it. You just can't take him to where he could go. You'll find in rural areas a lot of the teacher's time is spent in remediation. For example, a home economics teacher has to spend time teaching her students to do fractions-- you can't make a recipe without fractions!"

To sum it up, the director of North Carolina's public school vocational program said at a recent hearing, "When you go down to eastern North Carolina, you will cry over vocational education. It will break your heart."[55]

V. Gates County Close up: Fit for Work?

There is, of course, no typical rural Southern county, or town, just as there no typical vocational education program in a typical rural Southern high school. Yet, in many respects, Gates County, in northeastern North Carolina, reflects a pattern which prevails across the rural South. The largest single employer within the county is the school system. The local school board employs about 110 teachers, and about 290 other persons, including part-time bus drivers. There are about 2,100 students enrolled. Logging firms, farms, and a few small businesses and grocery stores hire some Gates County citizens. But the rest of the working age, able-bodied residents among the county's 8,300 citizens leave the county every workday for jobs outside the county. Fortunate ones spend only a half hour or so reaching work in nearby Ahoskie, or Franklin, Virginia, or at the nation's largest Coast Guard station in Elizabeth City. For others, the working day includes an hour's drive to and from the shipyards in Norfolk, Portsmouth or Hampton, Virginia, or the meat packing plants in Smithfield. Some few leave home each Sunday, spend the week working elsewhere, and drive home Friday afternoons for the weekend. Over a fourth of the population is poor according to the 1970 census. Sixty-three percent of the housing is substandard; only 43 percent of the houses have indoor toilets, or hot and cold running water. Blacks comprise about 53 percent of the population, a figure which is slightly lower than similar population statistics for the surrounding counties in what is called the Albemarle Basin, a 20-county region with a lower per capita income

level and higher unemployment rates than the rest of North Carolina.

In the Basin, and in Gates County, changes in employment patterns have happened rapidly in the last two decades. The decline of the family farm and rise of the corporate farm has, in the words of one agribusiness advocate, "released people from the land." Last year, only two white high school graduates from the vocational education program at Gates County High School went into farming. Both joined their fathers on land owned by their families many years. Twenty-five years ago only a handful of graduates would have turned to any other means of employment. After World War II, nearly every black man farmed either his own family's small holdings, or worked on the larger farms owned by whites. Today, there are only eight black men farming fulltime in Gates County. Mechanization, restrictive credit policies, the lure of steady wages at public jobs have played roles in reducing farming as a career option for young blacks.

The county's land mass, like its population, is small in comparison to North Carolina's 99 other county units. Approximately 60,000 square acres are contained within Gates' borders. Three timber companies, all headquartered elsewhere, own over a third of the land. Logging operations and sawmills hire about 11 percent of the county's workforce. Government, another major employer within the county, owns or controls a substantial portion of the county's land. The Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, which comprises the county's eastern edge, contains a total of 90,000 acres, 20,000 of which are inside Gates County.

A state park has about 2,300 acres. The remaining cleared land is divided up among farmers, small landholders, one incorporated town, which is the county seat, and homesites.

Gates County since World War II has changed from a self-contained, largely self-sufficient farming community employing most of its young at home to a computer's bedroom almost entirely dependent upon distant corporations for income. Yet, typical of the vocational education programs in most of the South's rural high schools, Gates County's career training education remains virtually unchanged, embedded in tradition, tenure policies, the want of funds, racial prejudice, sexual values, and generally, until recently, a reluctance to change. There is no course in any of the skills usually required of apprentice shipyard employees, or any course in logging, or governmental service, or any of those jobs which might open in Gates County, or any preparation for the creation of new ways of making a living at home. For the high school's 63 physically or mentally handicapped there was, the principal acknowledged, "No program at all. Nothing except what some individual teacher might do for one or two of them."

Specifically, there are few employment opportunities in the Albemarle Basin or north across the Virginia border which are favorable for women, particularly in light of their high school vocational training which emphasizes clerical and homemaking skills. Outside the home, some female high school graduates can find jobs clerking in retail sales, or as filing clerks, but without further training, most women in the region toil in a chicken processing plant, or in any of several piece-rate garment sewing

firms. Not only are unemployment rates higher for women than for men in the Basin, and Gates County, and especially higher for black women, but their earnings are dramatically lower: the median income for women is $1,984 compared to $4,546 for men, according to the 1970 Census.

Although black students are a numerical majority in the Gates County system, they are enrolled in proportions greater than their population in vocational education courses. There seems to be a virtual tracking system in place. Similar to neighboring counties in the Albemrale Basin, blacks often comprise as much as 80 percent of the enrollment in some skills classes, particularly brick laying and auto mechanics.

Finally, like virtually every vocational education program in the rural South, there is no provision in Gates County for a handicapped student's vocational development. Classes, machines, such as they are, tools, textbooks, and teaching methods are designed with the unimpaired in mind. Doors won't open for any student confined to a wheel chair, for example. There are no braille texts.

Gates County is one of those "least able to pay" for vocational education in North Carolina. The county's vocational programs receive 74 percent in state and federal funds, compared to the more prosperous urban counties, such as Wake County, home of the capital city, which receives 68 percent. Gates County High School offers basic occupational training courses that vary little from those found in rural schools throughout the low-income South. The majority of vocational students choose between agriculture, business and office skills, home economics

classes and several trades. "Career Explorations" begins in Gates County Central Junior High. The teacher of this introductory course relies heavily on the Department of Labor's Dictionary of Occupational Titles-- a directory which soon will include a complete listing of military occupations. According to a recent study, the inclusion of military occupations will "sanction the contention that the armed forces can and should function as job development agencies-- indeed, that they have become the nation's principle source of vocational training."[56] In Gates County, already, 50 percent of the high school graduates annually enlist in the military, according to one source.

Not included in the Dictionary are occupational titles which have anything directly to do with labor unions. For example, secretarial work is listed for a labor union but there is not job title for a labor union organizer or labor lawyer. Students are counseled about industrial and service sector marketplaces in which they may sell their labor, but they are told no tales about the other side of this free enterprise system unions because business, industry and government leaders in the South strongly oppose an organized workforce. In fact, North Carolina law requires that "free enterprise" be taught in classrooms.

This career explorations teacher at Gates County Central Junior High also teaches woodworking to the boys. His female counterpart teaches home economics and typing to the girls. In this way sex role training takes form in junior high and crystallizes in high school. Masonry (bricklaying) classes were all male; carpentry had 31 boys and 4 girls; auto mechanics classes had 67 boys and 15 girls. There was a good mix of the sexes in a techni-

cal drafting and a wood technology course, but in the more advanced architectural drafting, only two girls sat in with 10 boys.[57] There were 136 girls enrolled in the various home economics courses in 1979, but no boys. Business and office courses also had all girl students, except for 24 boys who took Typing I, which is thought necessary for college, and six who took "Introduction to Business." Home Ec and office skills teachers are women at this school, and agriculture and trades teachers are men.

When asked why so few girls enroll in carpentry classes, one Gates County teacher said, "I think there are a lot of reasons. First, I don't think many girls think of themselves as someone who will become a carpenter. Second, there are just not that many for carpenters around here, and most of the girls at this age think they want to stick pretty close to home. And, I don't think many parents want their girls to take carpentry anyway."

Of 520 students (grades 10 through 12) in Gates County High School during the school years 1973-'75, 25 percent were in the college preparatory track, 30 percent were studying general curricular, and 45 percent were enrolled in the business/vocational track. A survey of these students conducted in 1974-'75-'76 yielded a 31 percent response. Some key points from that response, to aid in comparing the results of the three possible categories of study, are charted below:

| | Bus/Voc | General | College prep. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Continuing their education | 43 | 18 | 59 |
| Employed | 22 | 22 | 4 |
| Unemployed or Homemakers | 13 | 3 | 2[58] |

More students from the vocational track were continuing their education (largely at post-secondary vocational institutions) than graduates form the general curricula track. But the number of graduates employed was the same for vocational and general categories, and the number unemployed was higher for vocational/ business studies graduates.

The follow-up study also revealed that of those students who responded in 1974, 65 percent of those who took business curricula were working or studying in a related field, and 14 percent of those who took vocational courses other than home economics were studying for a job that related to the courses they took in high school.[59] Clearly, business courses are more relevant to these students, but the 65 percent figure may also be accounted for by the scarce employment opportunities for women in Gates County and the growing service sector elsewhere. Throughout the South many young women move from rural to urban areas to take advantage of more plentiful job possibilities in secretarial and sales work areas. Cities such as Atlanta, New Orleans and Memphis have low male to female ratios as a result.[60]

Of those students who responded to the follow-up survey and who indicated that they were continuing their education, the highest number were studying to be nurses, and then secretaries. The fourth highest number were studying general business skills, and

then there were two or three people each studying to be electricians, mechanics, computer operators, pipefitters, social workers, engineers, and other occupations.

Of those who responded that they had full-time jobs, the highest number of graduates were working in the Virginia shipyards, Next highest were secretaries, sales clerks and farmers, then came typists, welders, teachers' aides, cashiers, and military service.[61]

Follow-up studies are difficult; in this case, only 31 percent of the students responded and whether or not they truly represented other graduates is not known. In the listing of jobs the graduates hold and the kinds of jobs they are studying for there is no differentiation between graduates of the various tracks. But in Gates County, as in other state and local programs, vocational teachers and administrators claim little direct correlation between the courses they teach and their graduates' future employment. As one Gates County teacher said, "We don't teach an occupation such as bricklaying, although we always try to have hands-activity. We try to teach them about the tasks which are necessary to hold a job."

Thirty years ago, rural high schools in northeastern North Carolina offered home economics for girls, agriculture and "shop" (mainly woodworking) for boys. Today, even with some additions to these offerings, the traditional courses predominate. There are no vocational education courses for jobs in those sectors which are predicted to have substantial growth in the the immediate future-- government, electrical repair on small appliances and engines, or in computer programming, shipfitting, and welding. The county has been hamstrung by lack of funds and an inflexible

educational delivery system which has continued a vocational education program with little content change over 30 years.

Of course, perceptions of change vary. One long-time vocational teacher at Gates County High School thinks much progress has been made. He says, "They only had farming courses when I was in school. No trades. I was learning about hogs and cows when what I really wanted to learn was woodworking." Today, woodworking is taught at his alma mater, even though the irony of the curriculum addition did not escape the teacher, who remarked, "But there just are not that many jobs for carpenters abound here."

Gates County's Board of Education has not resolved the policy questions growing from the flight of the county's young to jobs outside their native place. That policy is made by default, and, for many students, prepares them neither for a job at home or away.

One ambitious project, though, may change vocational education in Gates County in the coming years. In 1974, a school principal in neighboring Chowan County, secured a grant to study the vocational education aspirations of high school graduates in his own county, Gates and perquimans counties, which adjoins Chowan. He found that of the 91 former students who responded to his survey, 65 graduates were continuing their education or training at two or four-year colleges, technical institutes or at state universities. Eighteen were working. Five were unemployed, or homemakers. And, to his astonishment, of those who were continuing their educations, 15 were studying to be nurses. Yet not one of the four high schools in the three counties offered any courses in health careers.

At least with regard to that one career option, he concluded, secondary education had shortchanged those students. And he knew why: neither of the three counties by themselves could afford to offer a curriculum beyond what they provided at the time. During the course of this study, the principal learned that other rural communities, faced with similar budget restrictions and changing curricula needs, had banded together to form some direction. After securing approval of three boards of education, and each county's governing commission, he surveyed community citizens asking if they would favor a tri-county career education center sponsored jointly by the three political bodies. No high school's basic program would be altered, he said by way of definition. Courses available at the proposed center would be the same as those found routinely at larger, better endowed high schools in the cities. And there would be better facilities. Additionally, the center he envisioned would provide advanced courses for the academically talented in languages, music and art. Barely 50 percent of the respondents endorsed the idea.

Today, as of this writing, it seems almost certain that the Tri-County Center will receive construction and operating funds from state and federal sources as well as private foundations, and will be completed within the next few years. Committees of teachers, administrators, counselors and community and business leaders have been meeting, making plans, even drawing up lists of possible course areas. They include automotive, woodworking, electronics, data, graphics, health careers, cosmetology, food, agriculture, business occupations courses, and a few advanced academic classes. The principal, now director of the proposed

Center, cites two major reasons for its development: 1) the low tax base in each county, coupled with the allocation formulas for state and federal funds which provide insufficient support for a broad range of programs on rural schools and 2) the small size and student enrollment of the schools: "We may only have seven kids in one school who want to take advanced bricklaying."

Students from the three county high schools will be able to go to the Tri-County Center for a half day of vocational courses. The main problems foreseen for the Center are 1) coordinating funding from the three counties, and 2) busing students fairly long distances to attend the school, across county lines.

For several counties to consolidate facilities, teachers and buses for high school education is relatively new to North Carolina. But the state already has area comprehensive vocational centers for secondary students in nine counties. Four of them are in urban areas. The centers are built to provide vocational training opportunities beyond the capabilities of local high schools. Although there are technical schools and community colleges in the state that are under utilized and in close proximity to these high schools, North Carolina law forbids students under age 18 from using the post-secondary facilities except by specific arrangements for special students. On either side, to the east and west of Gates County, however, there are technical institutes with space and facilities to spare, yet the new, multimillion dollar Tri-County Career Education Center is the only legal answer to the question of how to provide better facilities and expanded programs to high school vocational education students.

In January, 1979, the director of the proposed Tri-County Center took a group of businessmen and community leaders from the three counties up into Virginia, to tour the P.D. Pruden Voc-Tech Center near Suffolk. The Pruden Center is a joint school of the Isle of Wight County and the cities of Suffolk and Franklin. With an enrollment of about 600 students who attend on half-day shifts, the Pruden Center is an approximate model of what North Carolina's Tri-County Center hopes to be. The North Carolinians saw health career classes, auto mechanics facilities, greenhouses and wood-working shops, as reported in The Gates County Index, January, 1979. They also got a dose of vocational training philosophy from Pruden's director: "Here at Pruden Center, we teach attitude first. Then comes leadership and draftsmanship. We preach safety, and we teach ladies and gentlemen."

The Pruden Center director was also proud to report, "Interest in the school is increasing. Although overall enrollment in the home high schools has decreased, Pruden Center's enrollment has increased."

Consolidated vocational education centers such as the one being developed by Gates, Chowan, and Perquimans counties, "are assaults on the fiefdoms of local school boards and county commissioners," says a top official in the American Vocational Education Association. Yet, the Tri-County director says that according to a recent poll, 92 percent of the area people now approve of the Center's concept.

One school board member, the local newspaper reported that the center would better train students for community colleges-- a statement that rings familiar throughout the halls of vocational education.

In North Carolina and in other states of the South, the post-secondary system has blossomed into one which needs large numbers of students to remain viable, and which, in the words of a North Carolina administrator, is replacing the four-year colleges in parents' and students' aspirations. This is because specific skill training often promises higher lifetime wages than does a degree from an expensive four-year residency at college, he said. The aim of high school vocational education today, in many states, is to send at least half of the graduates into the technical institutes and community colleges.

In time, the Tri-County Career Education Center may entirely replace vocational education in the three schools; more likely, some of the basic traditional course areas will remain in the high schools, such as masonry-- which in eastern North Carolina is attended primarily by black males-- and home economics. It may be that those students who can travel the miles and take the time to attend the new Center, and who qualify for the higher-skill courses, will again represent one economic/social strata more than another. It appears likely, if the Pruden Center is the model for the Tri-County Center, that girls and boys will still be stratified into traditional occupational roles, and attitude-training again will be an overriding goal. And, finally, the lack of on-the-job training positions and job opportunities for high school graduates in Albemarle Basin area will continue even as the Tri-County Center sends its trainees off in search for jobs.

## Conclusion

Vocational education in the rural South, as we have seen, defies easy classification. The absence of vital data about the outcomes of vocational education on the secondary level, the region's own great diversity, as well as the many school systems with their differing personalities, preclude generalizations. Nevertheless, from countless interviews, from content analysis of curricular offerings, from the accumulated official reports, some legal documents, a review of the literature, and, to the extent possible, from analysis of the workforce in several regions by class and racial origin, sex, and educational background, there emerges the outline characteristics of a colonial educational system which perpetuates class antecedents, stratification by race or gender, and thwarts the widely accepted dream of upward mobility.

The South's rural schools, and particularly their vocational education programs, are not organic outgrowths of their entire communities, but, rather, they serve the needs of a few who produce for capital accumulation. Through vocational education a majority of the South's young are being introduced to skills, or inculcated with attitudes and ideologies which fit them out only for a world vastly different from the one in which they were born or are growing up. What they are being taught will usually force them to migrate to, or commute between, metropolitan centers where jobs are concentrated. Little or nothing, either purposely or unwittingly, is taught about the economy, culture or history of work in their own rural communities;

thus, schools are not the means by which the young may gain a sense of their own social place and worth, review and revitalize their own heritage, or create new ways to earn independent livelihoods at home.

Further, as in the pattern of European schooling during the height of colonial expansion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, schools in the rural South are hierarchical and age-specific. Competitive examinations, and recently adopted so-called competency tests, eliminate large numbers of students at particular grade levels from advancement either to more intensive academic work or vocational skills training. Instead of widening a child's horizons, schools in the rural South actually seem to narrow their world view by curbing occupational destinies during the twelve years.

State and federal budget formulas, tax-conscious local governing boards, and the near universal reliance upon the property tax as the chief source of school revenues frequently result in teacher salaries which are lower than their counterparts in metropolitan centers, buildings which need repair and worn equipment, limited curriculum offerings which remain unchanged for years. Rural education has the air of inferiority about it. Cumulatively, these shortcomings lower the school's esteem in the eyes of local citizens. Ironically, while many Southerners continue to believe the American dream that education is a great equalizer, the base of each school's prestige is its relationship in the occupational and class structure of society. The greater the proportion of its graduates going to the university, the greater its regard. But when blue collar jobs, the

military, or unemployment lines are the occupational destinies of the bulk of its graduates, regard for the schools is low. Bond issues for improvements are rejected. Christian, or segregated academies flourish. Vocational education lies at the bottom rung of the highly stratified educational system, both in the class origins of its students and in their usual job futures.

As if these apparent burdens were not sufficient for rural Southern schools, there is accumulated evidence of a colonial status being being accorded definable groups of persons on the basis of gender and race, and which evolve from the development of capitalism. Few women, and fewer balcks, and virtually no handicapped persons control the South's schools, either directly as school board members, or as vastly influential opinion molders such as the captains of local or regional industries. Fewer still manage the schools as superintendents or principals. The vocational education curriculum, as viewed by those statistics which are available and from the curricular content, seem to perpetuate stereotyped roles for blacks and women, especially with regard to work, status, the need to consume goods rather than produce or even control the production of goods or services. Much of the vocational education offered fosters emotional and academic dependancy, and an acceptance of authority without question. The emotionally or physically handicapped are denied even the "significance" of stereotyping in vocational education programs. They are ignored unless some individual teacher, or school system,

has recently sought to suit-out of pity not program-skills training to some few handicapped persons' abilities.

Finally, any conclusion about the South's rural schools, or their vocational education programs, must account for the region's own successive periods of colonization, and its Bourbon traditions. Schools and schooling have evolved from within this experience, not outside it, and these vestiges are evident. The region's first settlers, while colonizers themselves conquering a native people and appropriating their lands, were, in turn, subject to the whims of the Lord Proprietors in Great Britian. Education in the colonies aimed to legitimate the relations of domination and subjection necessary to maintain a colony. Later, the South was dominated by the political economy of the industrial Northeast. In 1913, just before vocational education began in the South, a professor of education told the founding convention of the Vocational Education Association that the vocational teacher should be trained to know the "relationship between present and probable supply and demand, the relative wages, and the changes in methods, devices, and organization effecting workers..."[62] For the South's burgeoning textile, tobacco and furniture industries, such schooling provided the means of furnishing their plants with a limitless supply of labor. Vocational education caught on quickly in the South.

While vocational education was fathered in Boston by Frank Parsons, who wanted to "put men, as well as timber, stone, and iron, in the places for which their natures fit them," an earlier, much more influential American advocated a tiered, or tracking, system of education for the "laboring and the learned."[63] The

state, he argued, should support a system of schools open only to "those persons whom nature had resolved with reason and virture" to be "rendered by liberal education worthy to receive and to guard the sacred deposit of rights and liberties of their fellow citizens."[64] Those deemed worthy were white and male.

Thus, in sum, what we have seen across the South in vocational educational shops and classrooms exists as a means of social control for the corporate state, and in an economy which demands efficient production and increased comsumption of goods and services. In this regard, vocational education in the rural South is what the nation apparently wants, and is getting in good measure.

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